



Archbishop of Montreal

Homily
Friday, May 1, 2020

Memorial of Saint Joseph the Worker and Consecration of the diocese (Mt 13:54-58)

God created humankind in his image.

“God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” We read this in the first chapter of the Bible, in the opening chapter of Sacred Scripture. A text from thousands of years ago, a very special text among the greatest writings in the history of humankind.

It is the affirmation of the dignity of every human being, each and every one of them. It is the profound acknowledgment of their dignity, no matter their health, their profession, or their age. The dignity of each one of them is affirmed by recognizing the human being as created in the image of God. This places our respect for the human dignity of each individual on a solid foundation. Today, we ask that by the grace of God we will become even stronger in recognizing this dignity in each member of every family, of every society, of every people all over the earth.

Especially during this pandemic, but really always in particularly difficult times throughout history, we must keep our sight fixed on the importance of the dignity of each human being. We must remember the dignity of those who are sick, who are exposed to the virus, suffering in many ways, all those who are now isolated and alone during this time of confinement.

We must not forget the dignity of workers, no matter their employment situation. We remember the dignity of those who have recently lost their job and of those who have been unemployed for some time. We remember that what gives dignity to each human being is not what they do. It is not dependent on the kind of work they do.

What gives dignity to a worker in the workplace is that it is a human person who works, no matter what work they do. We must never forget this. When someone has lost their job, it is a human person who has lost their job. Among workers, all workplace positions matter. The dignity of the worker does not depend on their place in the organizational chart. This equality of dignity is the equality of dignity of each human being.

In this time of pandemic, we turn not only to Joseph but also to Mary. In every crisis, in every health or humanitarian crisis, the Church reaches out to those afflicted. She does so through the work of lay people, priests and deacons, and men and women of the consecrated life. They respond in a thousand ways.

If there are people who have leprosy, there is someone who will go to them to be close to them, even accepting the risk of falling ill to leprosy themselves.

In the times of the plague, there were people who helped, who took care of the sick, even if it meant suffering from the plague themselves.

We see this throughout the history of the Church. Together with Jesus Christ, crucified and resurrected, men and women have given themselves to service to be close to the most destitute, the poorest, the most suffering.

Theirs is not the obvious response! Reaching out to others is not the obvious response to isolation, confinement, and physical distancing. It is not obvious that we have to take care of everyone, and it is not easy to reach out to everyone.

The Church might like to serve better in this time, but it is not always possible. She would like to be closest to the poorest, the most destitute, but this is not always possible. This makes this feast day on May 1 a special opportunity to turn to Mary and to Joseph.

We turn to Mary as the Mother of the Church so that she can provide for us, her children, and for all humankind. We ask her to take care of all humanity because we recognize, especially now, that circumstances make it difficult for members of the Church, all of us here, to take care of each other.

On this feast day of May 1, we also turn to St. Joseph in prayer, asking him to protect those whom we can no longer protect, as the limitations resulting from the confinement prevent us from helping them adequately.

In an acute crisis, what may be most difficult is experiencing a sense of loss of power. We would like to do something for those near to us, but circumstances stand in the way. We experience how much we are limited in coming to the help of people around us.

Let us remember that God has the power to reach everyone, no matter the depth of their despair. God has the power to touch every heart, no matter the anguish the heart is experiencing. Praying to Mary, praying to Joseph, joining ourselves to them in prayer becomes a privileged moment to place everyone under their protection and care.

During this Mass, for the first time, I will recite a prayer to ask for the protection of Joseph for us in a special prayer. And in the course of the celebration, I will consecrate us to Mary, the Mother of the Church.

Therefore, let us remember the vulnerable people among us whose needs exceed our ability to provide, let us take the time to pray so that we can reach them in prayer and provide care and protection in this way. Let us take the time for prayer and seek the protection of St. Joseph and the Virgin Mary for them and for us.

I will now recite the prayer for the intercession of St. Joseph so that he may come to our aid.

Let us pray.

Saint Joseph,

We entrust ourselves to your protection,

Saint Joseph, you who are the Patron of the Universal Church, the Patron of Workers and the First Patron Saint of Canada.

Protect the Church so that she may continue to work bravely to proclaim the good news of Christ's resurrection to all people at all times.

Protect the faith of families and individuals who had prepared for the Sacraments of Christian Initiation so that they may overcome their disappointment and grow in their thirst for God.

Protect the hearts of all engaged couples whose plans for marriage were upset so that they will soon experience this transformation of their lives even more deeply.

Protect the hope of families and individuals who have lost a loved one whom they were unable to visit, unable to provide them with spiritual and human accompaniment, protect them in their grief and mourning.

Protect the sick who are separated from their families, may the risen Jesus touch their hearts and comfort them as he himself was comforted by the angel during his agony in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Protect all health care workers so that they might find in prayer the strength to serve the sick through long hours of work while at risk of contagion.

Protect the elderly who are particularly affected and vulnerable in the face of this pandemic so that they may know in their hearts that they are supported, rather than abandoned by their families, society, and the Church.

Protect the human dignity of those who have lost their jobs, whose economic well-being is in peril, and who are fearful in the face of tomorrow.

Protect those who govern and regulate the economic and social life so that they may seek the path of compassion, justice, and solidarity.

Protect the love in families so that family members may grow in mutual attentiveness, patience, reciprocity of giving, and prayerfully imitating the Holy Family.

Protect our Christian communities, our parishes, and our missions so that they may be committed to the mission, here and now, relying on the presence of the risen Christ and strengthened by the Holy Spirit.

May our personal and family prayer life, our reading of the Bible, our prayer online, and our spiritual communion increase. May the thirst for the Eucharist grow in us, the People of God, who are longing to participate again in the celebration of Mass.

Saint Joseph, you who are a just man, you who are a descendant of King David, you who are the husband of Mary and the adoptive father of Jesus, you who have been in this world as a faithful servant of God's Plan of Love, we entrust ourselves to your protection, we entrust families to you so that they may be domestic churches, we entrust to you the dignity of men and women in their vocation to work, we entrust our diocese to you so that it may be the home of the Holy Family and welcome Mary, the Mother of the Saviour.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Christian Lépine". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

† Christian Lépine
Archbishop of Montreal